

VIII. *An Account of a Subærated Denarius of the Plætorian Family, adorned with an Etruscan Inscription on the Reverse, never before published or explained. In a Letter to Mathew Maty, M. D. Sec. R. S. from the Rev. John Swinton, B. D. F. R. S. Custos Archivorum of the University of Oxford, Member of the Academy degli Apatisti at Florence, and of the Etruscan Academy of Cortona in Tuscany.*

Dear Sir,

I.

Read Feb. 27, 1772. THE piece I have undertaken to consider here is a subærated (see TAB. II. n. 1.) denarius of the Plætorian family, which lately fell into my hands. It exhibits on one side a female head, representing the goddess Libera, or Proserpina, according to M. (1) Havercamp, before which stand the letters *P COSINI*, P COSINI, very ill preserved. On the reverse, we discover a bust of the goddess SORS, on a sort of basis, adorned with the inscription F SOR ANT, or rather AN; under which, in the exergue, appear the Etruscan letters *ANIVID*, FIR,

(1) Sig. Havercamp. *Commentar. in Fam. Roman. Numism.* *Omn. &c.* p. 313, 314.

Tab. II.

n. 1.



AR



Tab. II.

n. 2.



AR



Tab. II.

n. 3.



AR



or rather FVR, ANTIE, *i. e.* FORS, FORTVNA, or SORS, ANTII, or ANTIAT, equivalent to the Latin inscription above it. The Etruscan elements seem rather better preserved than the Latin. The coin is, however, in but indifferent conservation, though pretty much of the thin silver plate remains still upon it. I must not omit observing, that it has never yet been communicated to the learned world.

II.

The symbol on the reverse here is the same that occurs on the reverses of two or three (2) other consular coins of the Plætorian family, with the word SORS attending it. The Latin inscription, on the piece before me, is extremely similar to one upon a denarius of the Rustian family, now in my small collection, a draught of which may be seen in the plate (3) here referred to. The symbol there is a double Fortune, or rather two galeated Fortunes which were considered as deities by the Romans. The divinity SORS, on the coins of the Plætorian family, similar to mine, is asserted by (4) Vaillant and Havercamp to be the SORS, or rather one of the SORTES, worshiped in the temple of the SORTES at Prænestē; whereas it was the SORS, or rather one of the SORTES, adored in the temple of those deities at Antium, as we find demonstratively proved by the coin I am attempting to explain. The whole

(2) Sig. Haverc. in *Fam. Plætor.* Tab. I. n. 1, 2, 3.

(3) See TAB. II. n. 2.

(4) I. Vaill. *Num. Antiqu. Familiar. Romanar.* p. 238, 239, 240. Amstelædami, 1703. Sig. Haverc. *Comment. Sc.* p. 324. super-

superstructure, therefore, erected by those two learned men on that supposition must necessarily fall to the ground.

III.

The Etruscan inscription, on the reverse of my denarius, in the exergue, seems to allude to a passage in Tully, relative to the origin of those deities denominated *SORTES* by the Romans, and to be illustrated by, as well as to throw some light upon, that famous passage. As this point is extremely curious, I shall beg leave to transcribe the whole passage, which has been handed down to us (5) in the following terms:

“ Numerium Suffucium Prænestinorum monumenta
 “ declarant, honestum hominem ac nobilem, somniis
 “ crebris, ad extreum etiam minacibus, cum jubere-
 “ tur certo in loco, silicem cædere, perterritum visis,
 “ irridentibus suis civibus, id agere cœpisse: itaque
 “ perfracto faxo Sortes erupisse, in robore INSCVLPTIS
 “ PRISCARUM LITERARUM NOTIS. Is est hodie
 “ locus septus religiose propter Jovis pueri, qui lactens
 “ cum Junone, Fortunæ in gremio fedens, mammam
 “ adpetens, &c.” “ In some of the antient monu-
 “ ments of Præneste, mention is made of one Nu-
 “ merius Suffucius. This man, who was one of the
 “ most considerable and most venerable persons in
 “ his city, both for his probity and noble extraction,
 “ was admonished, in different dreams, and at last
 “ with terrible menaces, to go to a certain place in
 “ Præneste, and there cut a flint. Being terrified

(5) Cic. *De Divinat.* Lib. II. c. 41.

“ with

" with these frequent visions, he obeyed. He came
 " to the place appointed, and there, in the presence
 " of several of his fellow-citizens, who laughed at his
 " attempt, tried to cut a flint ; which, to the great
 " surprize of the spectators, gave way to the edge of
 " the knife. And out of the body of the flint drop-
 " ped several pieces of wood, (or rather oak) each of
 " which had an inscription IN THE ANTIENT
 " CHARACTERS. The place where this prodigy was
 " performed is now walled in, because in it is very
 " religiously kept an image of Fortune, holding Ju-
 " piter and Juno, represented as infants, in her arms,
 " &c." As I have formerly (6) proved that THE ANTI-
 ENT CHARACTERS OF ITALY, or the PRISCARUM
 LITERARUM NOTÆ of the Romans, were the Etrus-
 can letters ; and as the inscription formed of those
 characters, mentioned by Tully, in the passage here pro-
 duced, cannot well be supposed (7) to have contained
 any other word than V D , FIR, or rather
 FVR, applicable to the deity, or deities, so called,
 and worshiped, both at Antium and Præneste ; we
 may fairly suppose the Etruscan inscription before me
 to have glanced at the celebrated passage just pro-

(6) *De Priscis Romanorum Literis Dissertat.* Oxonii 1746.
Philosopb. Transact. Vol. LXI, p. 88, 89.

(7) This must be allowed extremely probable, as the pretended origin of the 'L'OTs, mentioned by Tully, must have been supposed prior to the foundation of their temp'les at Antium and Præneste, and therefore the original inscription was only, in all probability, supposed to have been either FIR, or FVR ; though, after the erection of those temples, the deity or deities, now in view, might have been denominated F SOR ANT, and FOR ANT, on antient Roman coins. Vid. J. Vaill. & Sig. Haverc. in *Fam. Plætor. et Rust.*

duced, and consequently that this passage and my explication of that inscription may be presumed mutually to support and illustrate each other.

IV.

The first of the Etruscan elements, on the reverse of my coin, , is apparently that letter in the Etruscan alphabet which, in power, is equivalent (8) to F, or PH, though the character here differs somewhat from all the forms of that element that have hitherto occurred to me on the Etruscan monuments. The second is either I, or, as I am more inclined to believe, V. That it ought rather to be considered as V, seems to me to appear from the obliquity of its position, in respect of the first letter; which seems to indicate the side of the V next to that letter to have been effaced, by the injuries of time. The third is undoubtedly the antient Tuscan , (9) or R, somewhat blotted, or blurred. The fourth and fifth manifestly form the monogram , or AN, which has not yet occurred to me on any other Etruscan* monument. The sixth, seventh, and eighth,  , are evidently equivalent

(8) Anton. Franeisc. Ger. *Mus. Etrusc.* Vol. II. p. 416, 417. Florentiæ, 1737. (9) Id. ibid. p. 412, 417.

* From this instance, as well as others, that might easily be produced, it appears, that the Etruscans sometimes made use of monograms, as well as the Greeks, Romans, and Phœnicians. As the Romans, therefore, seem to have used monograms before the commencement of any intercourse with the Greeks, as is rendered probable by the very antient inedited quinarius here referred to (see TAB. II. n. 3.), which was, as I conceive, struck before the close of the fifth century of Rome; I am inclined to believe, that they borrowed this manner of writing from the Etruscans.

(10) to the Latin, or Roman, letters TIE. The whole inscription is therefore , FIR, or rather FVR, ANTIE, SORS, FORS, or FORTUNA, ANTII, altogether equipollent to the Latin inscription above it. That FVR ANTIE, in the antient Etruscan language, ought to be rendered, in Latin, FORS, SORS, or FORTVNA, ANTII, is apparent, from one of the Tables of Gubbio; which, according to (11) Sig. Olivier, exhibits the words AGRE TLATIE, equivalent to AGRI LATII, and is directly in point. Hence we may conclude, that FIR, or rather FVR, answers to the FORS, or FORTVNA, of the Latins, the Etruscans using constantly V for O; and consequently that , PVR, PHVR, or FVR, in (12) Hebrew, or, as some will have it, in the (13) antient Persic, FIR, or FVR, in Etruscan, and FORS, or FORTVNA, in Latin, denoted the very same thing.

V.

That SORS, or SORTES, and FORTVNA, probably the same deity, (14) were worshiped both

(10) Anton. Francisc. Gor. ubi sup. p. 407, 409, 414, 417

(11) *Una Lettera del Signor Annibale degli Abati Olivier, &c. Al Signor Abate Barthelemy, &c.* p. 42. In Pesaro, 1757.

(12) Esth. III. 7.

(13) Val. Schiad. Lex Pentaglot. p. 1432. Hanoviæ, 1612.

(14) Hence we find the celebrated temple of the LOTS, or SORTES, at Prænestæ to have been also denominated the temple of FORTUNE; nor do I doubt but the famous temple of the LOTS or SORTES, at Antium went likewise under that denomination. Sig. Havercamp. ubi sup. p. 324, 325.

by the Romans and the Etruscans, will (15) not admit of a doubt. The Romans seem to have used the words SORS and FORTUNA for one deity, on some occasions; and, on others, the term SORTES, as applicable to more divinities, and FORTVNAE, or FORTUNAE ANTIAT, as relative to two, to whom they assigned the (16) epithets FORTIS, and FELIX. One or both of those epithets may possibly be pointed out to us by the letter F, which precedes the words SOR ANT, on the basis below the bust of the goddess SORS, on the reverse of the coin in question. But that this is the true import of the word to which that letter belongs, I must by no means take upon me positively to affirm.

VI.

The medals of the Plætorian family similar to that I have been considering Havercamp (17) takes to have been struck in the time of the civil war, that succeeded Julius Cæsar's death; in which, perhaps, he may not be very remote from truth, though this he has not irrefragably proved. If it should, however, be allowed probable by the learned, the coin before me, which must be nearly of the same date with that war, will seem to have preceded about forty years the birth of CHRIST.

(15) Vid. Anton. Francisc. Gor. ubi sup. p. 214 215. Sam. Pitisc. in *Lex. Antiquitat. Romanar.* paf. aliosque author. quam plurim.

(16) Fabrett. *Inscript. Antiqu.* cap. ix. p. 632. Sig. Haverc. ubi sup. p. 324, 369. Amstelædami, 1734. Vid. etiam Vulp. *Vet. Lat. Prefan.* tom. III. cap. v. p. 98, & seqq.

(17) Sig. Haverc. ubi sup. p. 325.

VII.

Who P. Cœsinus, whose name seems to have been handed down to us by the Denarius I have been attempting here to explain, was, or what was the particular mode of his connection with M. Plætorius, by whom the piece was struck, I cannot at present, for want of sufficient light from antient history, and authentic Roman monuments, take upon me to decide. But this I may be allowed to say, that the piece before me is the only coin of the Cœsinian family that has hitherto escaped the ravages of time. That the Cœsinian family was of some note in Rome, we may infer, not only from the very curious denarius that is the object of my attention here, but likewise from two or three antient (18) Roman inscriptions, which have preserved to us the name of that family. As for M. Plætorius, mentioned on the denarius before me, (19) and other similar coins, he was, according to M. Havercamp, (20) questor to Brutus, one of Cæsar's murderers; and the piece I am endeavouring to explain first appeared, as already observed, a little (21) after that emperor's death. The Etruscan letters were not then intirely out of use: nay, they were not totally disused in some parts of Italy, and particularly at (22) Falerii, a considerable

(18) Jan. Gruter. *Corp. Inscript. ex recens. Jo. Georg. Græv.* p. CMLXXI. 9. DCLVIII. 1. Amstelædami, 1707. Ludovic. Anton. Murator. *Nov. Thesa. Vet. Inscript.* p. DCCXCIV. 7. Mediolani, 1740.

(19) Vid. I. Vaill. & Sig. Haverc. in *Fam. Plætor.*

(20) Sig. Haverc. ubi sup. p. 325.

(21) Id. Ibid.

(22) Strab. *Geogr.* Lib. V.

number of years after that tragical event. This we learn from Strabo, who flourished when Tiberius sat upon the imperial throne.

VIII.

Having now finished my attempt to elucidate a very curious inedited Etruscan coin, highly meriting the attention of the learned ; I would flatter myself, that an acquisition is hereby made to the science of antient medals, and consequently that this paper may prove not altogether unacceptable to the Royal Society. You will therefore be pleased to lay it before that very learned and most illustrious body ; and believe me to be, with all possible consideration and esteem,

SIR,

Your much obliged,

and very affectionate,

humble Servant,

Christ-Church, Oxon.
Oct. 10, 1771.

John Swinton.